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# Domestic Religion in Soviet and post-Soviet Moldova<sup>1</sup>

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The term domestication has been used by a number of scholars of religion in Eastern Europe to describe the relocation of aspects of public worship and community religion to the domestic sphere during communism (Dragadze 1993; Kononenko 2006; Rogers 2008, 2009). As such it has been deployed as a socio-spatial category to encapsulate “the idea of shifting the arena from public to private, from outside the home to its interior” as well as to signify “the harnessing and taming of that which had seemed outside the control of ordinary people”, having been previously restricted to religious specialists (Dragadze 1993: 150). There has, however, been little critical engagement with the term and what it might usefully be employed to signify. In this chapter, following a brief description of traditional religious practices associated with the home, like for example the veneration of icons, and the main aspects of domestic religious practice in Eastern Orthodoxy, I introduce some of the ways that Soviet policy generated a re-distribution of religious materials and agencies in the Soviet Union. Ethnographic studies that engage with the problem of domestic religion have focused on Georgia and Azerbaijan (Dragadze 1993), Ukraine (Kononenko 2006) and Russia (Rogers 2008, 2009) amongst others. During the communist period, religious practices and materials such as sacred objects, books and even furniture shifted location, with the home taking on greater significance and meaning extending earlier domestic forms of religious practice like icon veneration and healing practices. In many cases, this process enhanced the religious role of women in the religious sphere. As such, scholarship on domestic religion informs our understanding of everyday family life and the position of women in Soviet and post-Soviet societies.

The term domestic carries strong associations with privacy, devotion to home or family life and domestic duties. It conjures images of the domesticity of women's lives and is therefore a gendered category. Indeed, domesticity as a quality demanded or desired of women has been central to most Christian cultures. In the Orthodox Christian societies of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the home is largely considered the female sphere (Håland 2014; Olson and Adonyeva 2012) and in this sense, women appear to be constrained by male dominance of the so-called public sphere with their rituals and practices mar-

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ginalised to the domestic setting. However, as Evy Håland (2014) argues in her research on Greek Orthodox women's ritual practices, this simple binary fails to recognise that the female sphere extends beyond the purely private and also fails to do justice to the crucial role that women play of public religious ritual, for example in the funerary rituals in cemeteries (Håland 2014: 265-350).

In order to illustrate the broader points made by anthropologists and sociologists of religion regarding the domestic sphere and the feminization of religion, I give a brief account of policy towards religions and its effects in the Soviet Union; this is followed by two brief examples taken from my own research in the Republic of Moldova. In the final section of the chapter, I return to broader debates about the relationship between public and private religion in the Soviet Union with reference to gender dynamics. As Gal and Kligman (2008: 38) point out, in Europe “the relations between men and women have long been ordered around the public/private dichotomy” and consequently exploring domestic religion gives us an important insight into the experience of the formation of gender regimes in the Soviet Union (Kaminer 2017: 82).

## 1. Religion in the Soviet Union

A full account of Soviet policies towards religion is not possible, but a brief periodization of anti-religious campaigns and repression will be instructive. In the Soviet Union from the 1920s onward, the communist regime engaged in waves of anti-religious propaganda and repression. During the early years of Soviet power, policies towards religion mainly directed at separating Church and state. The Separation Decree of 1918 seemed to level the religious field by granting equal legal recognition for citizens to profess any faith or none (Wanner 2007: 36) and this was followed by moves to reduce the economic power of the Orthodox Church and its control over education. By 1923, however, the Communist Party of Ukraine had noticed that controlling sectarians was significantly more difficult than the Orthodox Church; following the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 antireligious policy changed in favour of propaganda as its main tool to counter religious belief including public debates, exhibitions, lectures and publications (Wanner 2007: 39). Newspapers and journals such as *Bezbozhnik* (Godless) and *Antireligioznik* (Antireligious), dedicated to the publication of anti-religious and anti-sect propaganda, were published from the 1920s onward and were supported by the League of Militant Atheists, recruited to campaign and mobilize the people against religious institutions. The anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s intended to liberate people from the grip of irrational belief and superstition were a relative failure, especially in the countryside, where villages were able to use various means to mobilize in defence of their churches (Wynot 2004: 97-99).



From 1928, the state pursued a much more aggressive policy against religion hand in hand with its policy of collectivization and industrialisation. In forcing peasants to join collective farms, the state aimed to increase production whilst eliminating private property and thus shrinking the scope of household economies. The elimination of wealthy peasants would have the intentional side effect of depriving the Orthodox Church of its financial support in the village (Wynot 2004). 1929 saw the introduction of new wide-ranging laws to regulate religion,<sup>2</sup> heralding in a much harsher period of “threefold secularization process” (Wanner 2007: 52) designed to eliminate the role of religion in social, moral and political life. This comprised of dismantling the Orthodox Church and its authority, removing religion from the public sphere and the propagation of an alternative Marxist materialist ideology to replace religious beliefs (Wanner 2007: 52). In addition to the use of propaganda and direct punitive action against individuals, including deportations and executions, the state also began to close and destroy places of worship (Dragadze 1993: 149).

With the advent of the Second World War, Stalin reconsidered his attitude towards the Russian Orthodox Church as he needed to strengthen “emotional loyalty to the state” (Dragadze 1993: 153). The new attitude culminated in the famous meeting between Stalin and the Bishops of the Orthodox Church that took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1943, at which a concordat was reached that normalised church-state relations and allowed the Church to conduct normal activities. Worshippers could attend church, perform services at home and take part in religious processions (Chumachenko 2002: 190). In contrast, so-called sectarians fared very badly in the post-war period as the Orthodox Church was given priority over other religious groups (Chumachenko 2002: 190) culminating in two mass exiles of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the last such mass exiles to Siberia and Central Asia, in 1949 and 1951 (Baran 2014).

In the immediate post-Stalin period of 1953 to 1958 there was a general liberalisation of policy towards religions and most mainstream churches and communities could function without too much state interference. The last period of harsh repression was instigated by Nikita Khrushchev at the height of the Cold War from 1958 and until 1964. This period represented a return to many of the policies of the 1930s and has been described as a “political war” on the part of the state (Chumachenko 2002: 193). The fluctuations in policy towards religion conform to the general periodization of the Soviet history

2 These laws, which included the 1929 Law on Religious Associations “the principal normative source of Soviet restriction on churches” (Boiter 1987: 109) and amendments to the Constitution, effectively confiscated all Church property and turned it over to local authorities, criminalised unregistered religious communities and public evangelism and prohibited all forms of religious education and severely restricted publishing activities (Wanner 2004: 48-49).

with “crises and resolutions, moments of tragedy and periods of calm” (Chumachenko 2002: 193).

The forced retreat of religious actors, institutions and communities in the face of state repression, which took various forms from propaganda campaigns to mass deportations described above, over the eighty years of Soviet power, achieved varied results depending on the specific context. There was an appearance of success as “the transmission of religion was confined to the domestic sphere” (Hann 2010: 12). In the Soviet Union, however, the authorities were aware that despite church closures the religious population, “left to its own devices,” congregated at informal worship services and numerous house churches (Fletcher 1970: 383). In Soviet Moldova for example, which was incorporated into the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War, the number of functioning Orthodox churches fell from over 1100 to just over 200 by 1988 (Dima 1994: 184). Of the 27 monasteries open when Soviet forces arrived in 1944, only one continued to function until the end of the communist era (*Locașuri Sfinte* 2001).

Although the closure of institutions and the destruction of buildings visibly demonstrated the end of the old social order, “superstition”, as religious belief and practice was routinely referred, proved tenacious (Kelly 2016: 3). Douglas Rogers (2008: 124) describes the domestication of religion, that followed, in these terms: “First, religious practice often slipped from public view into the spaces of the home; and second, believers began to domesticate religion, to claim for themselves some of the ritual and even theological competencies formerly arrogated to specialist clerics.” The closure of religious institutions had some less obvious consequences, too. In many cases, religious materials, publications, icons, bibles and ritual objects were hidden or rescued from churches condemned to closure and were thus dispersed into communities. These materials found their way into the homes and daily lives of believers. Sometimes large collections of items were hidden to prevent confiscation; other less conspicuous items were used in the domestic setting, where they were used in healing practices, added to the icon corner, or read on Sunday’s in place of attending the liturgy (Kapaló 2011). The people that were particularly active in preserving local religious culture, referred to by Kononenko (2006: 47) as “culture keepers”, became custodians of both intangible and material elements of religious culture.

As well as re-distributing material religious *charisma*, the closure of places of worship also provoked fear amongst individuals and communities for their spiritual and physical well-being. As ritual protection, obligations, and taboos were compromised “fear of the consequences of violation prompted substitute religious activity during the Soviet period” (Kononenko 2006: 47). In this sense, the destruction of religious institutions gave new impetus to folk practices



that could substitute them and, as Kononenko (2008: 48) points, out in most cases “private religious activities were not targeted” by the authorities.

Gender was highly significant in the processes outlined here; older women in village society were “seen as outside Soviet control” and freer from many of the pressures to conform to Soviet ideals (Viola 1986: 23-24). As these women were also considered “not fully feminine” in Church practice, “the combination of political reality and folk belief led to the feminization of religious activity” (Kononenko 2006: 48-49). This process of feminization and geriatricization was also reflected amongst certain religious minority or dissenter groups. In his anthropology of Russian Old Believers, Douglas Rogers (2009: 174) recounts that in the Soviet-era “their pastors were nearly universally spiritual mothers rather than fathers, and services took place in domestic spaces that had themselves become more closely associated with women than with men”. As Rogers goes on to explain, this process came to characterise all societies in the Soviet bloc, with “the disassociation of men from religious life as they identified more closely with public party positions, waged labor in the state farm, and the pervasive networks of socialist society” (Rogers 2009: 175).

Earlier waves of religious dissent and repression in the Russian Orthodox world from the seventeenth century on had resulted in a similar phenomenon of domestic religious ritual replacing or supplementing public worship amongst groups such as the Old Believers (Paert 2003; Douglas 2009), Skoptsy (Engelstein 1999: 99-101) and Stundists (Zhuk 2004). In the Soviet era, these groups were joined by new underground *catacomb churches* that mirrored earlier patterns of domestic practice and hidden worship. The Josephites (Fletcher 1970), Inochentists (Clay 1998; Kapaló 2017), Greek Catholics (Mahieu and Naumescu 2008) and others transformed domestic space into sacred safe-havens, where liturgical practices could continue in seclusion. In addition, with the closure and the forced laicization of tens of thousands of monks and nuns across the Soviet Union and communist Eastern Europe, former members of religious orders set up household in towns and villages and continued to pursue a private religious life in and amidst socialist society (Wynot 2004).

During communism in the Soviet Union, what can be termed domestic religion therefore expanded in scope, becoming the site of a new assemblage of agencies, materials and charisma redistributed to the space of the home and the immediate family household. This new strata of domestic religion built upon ancient and traditional practices associated with household cults.

## 2. Domestic Cults and the Veneration of Icons

Certain aspects of religious observance have their legitimate place in the home. In scholarship on religions in the ancient world, the sphere of domestic religion is well researched. Using terminology such as household cult and domestic

shrine, domestic religion in the Greco-Roman world is the subject of wide-ranging studies. In public, the statues of Gods and Emperors were worshipped and offered sacrifices in special rites whilst in private homes the household gods were venerated (Herrin 2007: 98). The cult of the *lares*, as the gods of the household were called, was overseen by the *pater familias* (Lipka 2006: 327), but it was also the place where women worshiped and made offerings to the gods. The primary functions of domestic cults were to ensure protection and prosperity of the household.

Orthodox Christian Eastern Europe is in many ways the inheritor of Byzantine Roman culture (Bowes 2008) and “although there is no record of this, it seems likely that when Christians adopted their new monotheistic faith, they would have removed the old *lares* and set up new protecting images” (Herrin 2007: 99). In the Orthodox Christian tradition, Icons are sacred images of saints, divine persons, angels, events and lives. In scholarship on Orthodox Christian icons, the domestic aspect of their veneration is not emphasised, but may well have become “indispensable” for the faithful (Herrin 2007: 99). The icon corner, found in the Eastern or South-Eastern kitchen or living room, is ubiquitous in Orthodox households across the region. Acts of veneration before icons, such as burning incense or lighting a lamp, serve as the rites to ensure protection and good fortune for the household. Generally speaking, in rural areas of the Soviet Union, icons and icon corners remained an important sacred space in the privacy of the home (Kononenko 2006: 48). Icons are central to institutional Orthodox worship and devotions “but they can also function as social agents that decentralize authority normally concentrated in jurisdictional hierarchies” (Weaver 2011: 395). The materiality of icons in the home, therefore, creates the potential for alternative *loci* of practice and charisma.

The home is also the site of traditional healing practices which are often performed before the icon corner; this includes objects and materials sanctified through Church rituals, such as prayer books, holy water and chrism (holy anointing oil) (Kapaló 2011: 172-179). Another important aspect of domestic religious practice relates to death and dying. The care for ancestors is “regulated by community norms and is publicly displayed” (Olson and Adonyeva 2012: 313), however, certain aspects of the preparation and commemoration of the dead such as wakes and memorial meals are domestic affairs. Traditionally the main reasons for seeking divine intervention in the home were associated with protection, illness and death. All in all, the actions and policies of the Soviet state deposited new strata of religious practice and ritual in the home. The following two examples taken from my ethnographic research in the Republic of Moldova, illustrate the diverse ways in which religious agency, charisma and experience were expanded in this period.



### 3. Domestic Literacy Practices

In rural areas of Moldova, the home also became the site of scribal practices (see fig 1.). Important canonical scriptures, but more often non-canonical, apocryphal texts were copied by hand and sometimes also translated from other languages because of a lack of availability of religious material, due to state restrictions on publishing, but also due to preference (Kapaló 2011). In the Gagauz minority region of southern Moldova, women's writing practices in their mother-tongue were largely oriented towards religious culture during the Soviet period. Women participated in religious textual culture through copying and translating printed religious materials, especially powerful healing texts such as the apocryphal *Dream of the Mother of God*. The case of Georgina Afanasieva is representative of this form of domestic self-taught literacy. Born in 1925, Georgina spoke neither Romanian nor Russian as a child, the two dominant languages in Moldova, and was not able to attend school. In the 1980s (when she was already in her late 50s) she taught herself to read from Romanian books that had been rescued from the local Church when it was closed by the Soviet authorities. Having taught herself to read and write Romanian, she then made copies of the *Dream of the Mother of God* for other women in the village.



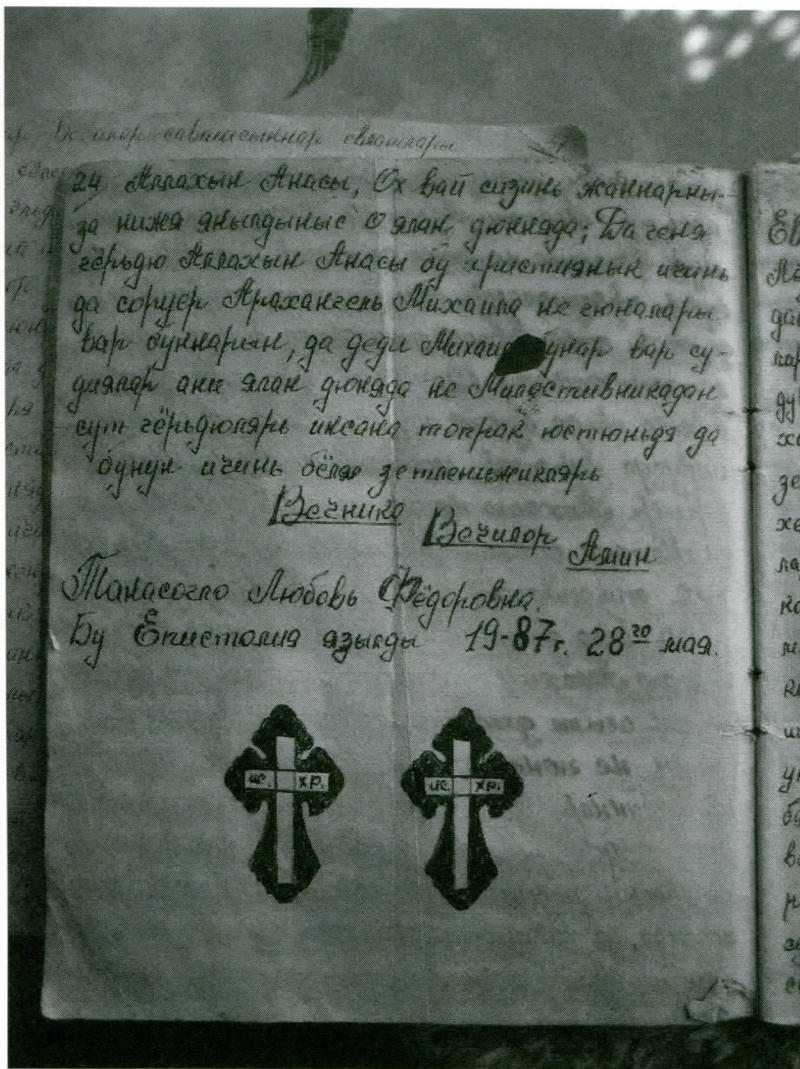


Figure 1. Example of copybook with religious texts in the Gagauz language dated 1987. Photo © James Kapalo, 2009.

In other women's narratives, divine intervention and miraculous events in the home are instrumental in overcoming illiteracy in order to access religious texts. Ilena Haralampevna from the village of Beşalma became locally famous for her large collection of copybooks that contained her prophecies and instructions from God and the Mother of God transmitted to her in dreams and visions. Born in 1880, she did not learn to read until the 1940s following the miraculous event her family recounted to me.

"One day she put some bread in the oven and the loaves came out with letters, Cyrillic letters like in the Church, raised on top of them in the crust. She took a piece of paper and placed it on the bread and traced the

shape of the letters through the paper. [...], we kept them for a long time after she died”.

Her granddaughter went on to explain,

“She would write all the things that will happen, all the things from her dreams, each word separated by a cross, pages and pages full, all in Gagauzian [the local minority language]. Half the notebook was full of the dreams she had, what she saw and there was also a prayer of the Mother of God, and she went round the whole village to everyone that had a troubled soul, everyone that was ill, she read the Dream of the Mother of God and it brought them peace and good health”.

These women’s narratives illustrate the relationship between reading and writing practices, the production of religious texts and the metaphysical realm in the domestic sphere during the Soviet period. The copybook of manuscript texts resulting from these practices were used in the home in healing practices (Kapaló 2011, 2014a) and substitute religious rituals on Sundays and Orthodox Church holidays (Kapaló 2011).

#### 4. Radical Religion and the Domestic Underground

Moldova had its own local variant of the Soviet Union-wide phenomenon of catacomb Churches (Fletcher 1970; Lane 1978: 80-90). Inochentism, which has its origins in the Tsarist period, grew out of an Orthodox radical movement led by a charismatic monk called Inochentie. First, the movement was persecuted by the Russian state and Church; its sacred centre was destroyed by the Bolsheviks in 1918, then it was outlawed in interwar Romania, and was designated a dangerous sect, alongside Jehovah’s Witnesses and Adventists, by Soviet authorities (Clay 1998; Kapaló 2017). In this context, the public character of the movement, which had centred on pilgrimage and penance, was transformed into a secret network with wandering *brothers* and *sisters* who moved from one safe house to the next. Inochentist communities began to construct alternative religious spaces for themselves, secret hideouts dug under their homes and gardens, transforming the material conditions of their Orthodox religious practice (see fig. 2).



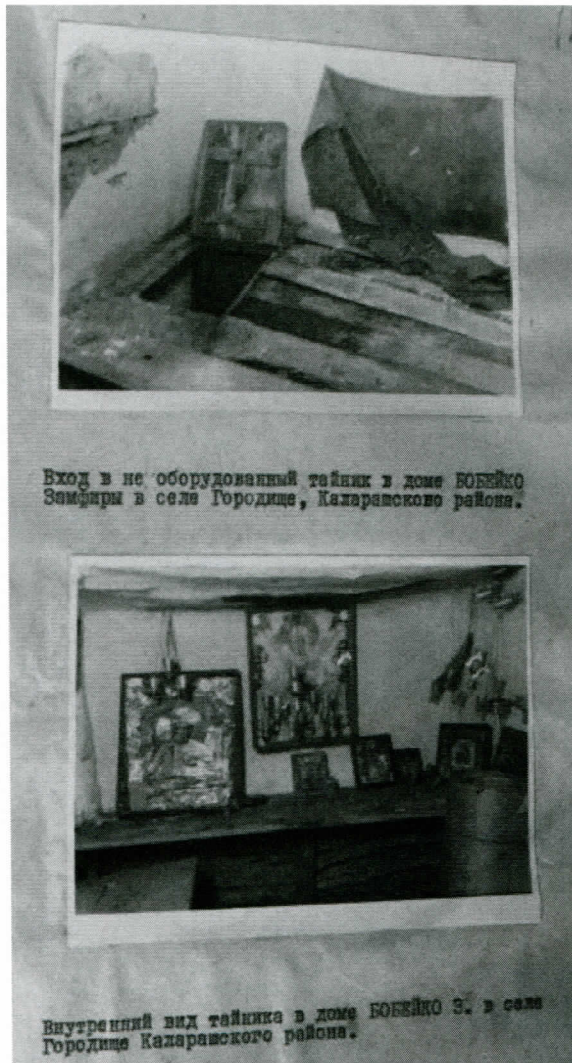


Figure 2. Photographs of an Inochentist hideout in Călărași district, Republic of Moldova (ASISRM-KGB 020193, 199).

Vera Shevzov (2007: 62) defines the Orthodox liturgy as the basis of the community's "lifeworld", highlighting its distinct role in bringing "ecclesial narratives and the Church's visual culture" together in transformative ways. In canonical Orthodoxy, the narrative performance of liturgy transforms the viewer's relationship to the icons presented during the ritual drama, giving them new meaning and power. Inochentism emerged out of this Orthodox lifeworld, but overtime it was significantly re-moulded in response to the changing social and political context. The uses and meaning of icons, and visual material culture more broadly, changed for Inochentists as they created new visual tools to animate a central narrative, which is the life, passion, death and resurrection

of their leader Inochentie at the hands of the Tsarist and Bolshevik authorities. Through the production of narrative icons of Inochentie's life, that became widespread and were reproduced in multiple variants and forms as postcards, wall hangings and illustrated books, these changes became integral to a re-imagined and re-embodied cosmological order no longer focused on the liturgy performed in and by the Orthodox Church, but now defined by subterranean hideouts excavated under homes and the new mission to spread the narrative of Inochentie and his teachings on the impending End of Days.

From the 1920s until the end of the Soviet system in Moldova in 1991, Inochentists maintained a secret network of safe-houses and subterranean chapels, between which *sisters* and *brothers*, who had dedicated their lives to the pursuit of salvation free from Soviet interference, travelled at night in secrecy. Having moved away radically from the old reality of the Orthodox liturgical lifeworld, Inochentists also challenged traditional Orthodox gender norms, elevating women to important positions as leaders with the title Mothers of God. The decentring of religious monopolies through the re-distribution of religious charisma in the form of texts, icons and religious specialists, enabled the suggestion and materialization of alternative modes of divine and worldly reality in the home.

In the post-Soviet era, Inochentist imagery has moved above ground and images of their divine-human leaders can be seen openly on display in homes. The networks continue to meet in homes and have not returned to the Orthodox mainstream. They continue to be the subject of societal prejudice and stigma, and therefore to a large extent maintain the secrecy of their rituals and organisational structure. Inochentist religion represents a radical form of domestic religion as outlined by Dragadze (1993), combining the spatial translocation of practice to the home with the production of new specialists who took control of sacred rituals and powers.

## 5. Domestic Religion and the Public/Private Divide

Domestic religion in Soviet Moldova continues to have resonances in the post-Soviet era. The women copyists and healers, and the Inochentist groups have come into conflict with the resurgent Russian Orthodox Church. Both groups face regular public denunciation from Orthodox priests and are forced to curb or hide their use of non-canonical texts, conduct services in secret and reach compromise positions so as not to attract religious sanctions (Kapaló 2011: 172-181, 148-150; Kononenko 2006: 50). The feminization and geriatricization that went alongside the spatial domestication of religion discussed by Dragadze, Rogers, Kononenko and others has largely been overturned by the return of religion to the public sphere since the 1990s. Public religion in post-Soviet societies has tended to ally itself with resurgent nationalist and patriarchal



chal conservative or anti-progressive forces. Religious revival, however, was only possible, because grass-roots domestic religion continued in many forms, often under the leadership of women.

How we understand the significance of domestic religion discussed by the scholars cited here, is contingent on some broader questions relating to distinctions between the private and the public in the Soviet and Post-soviet contexts and how in turn this impacts on gender relations. The gendered concept of domesticity as the space of the family and therefore the private sphere, and the male dominated public sphere is a binary that sits at the heart of ongoing debates on the place of religion in modernity and the significance of gender within this dynamic. Casanova has argued that the notion of religious freedom is “constitutive of Western modernity” (Casanova 1992: 17), as it was the first of all modern freedoms and is “intrinsically related to ‘the right to privacy’, that is, to the modern institutionalization of a private sphere free from government intrusion as well as from ecclesiastical control” (Casanova 1992: 17-18). But public and private spheres develop in distinct and shifting ways in different social and political contexts. In the Soviet Union, the official public realm was controlled by the rule of the party-state bureaucracy, which sought social control through collectives into which individuals were integrated and through which they could be monitored and shaped into ideal “Soviet individuals” (Zdravomyslova and Voronkov 2002: 50). The family was not isolated from public scrutiny as it represented one important form of collective and was “subjected to state-inspired observation and control” (Zdravomyslova and Voronkov 2002: 50-51); however, this could never be fully realised. In an effort to understand how individuals experienced state control of the private sphere, scholarship has turned to examining everyday life in the Soviet Union (Shlapentokh 1989; Fitzpatrick 1999; Kiaer and Naiman 2006). In the post-Stalinist era, various forms of privatization became evident, from increased importance of family and friendship networks to the almost universal exploitation of one’s position for personal gain (Shlapentokh 1989: 154). Everyday life scholarship also points towards the emergence of an “informal public sphere”, somewhere between private and public that included

“...the shadow or second economy, clientele groupings and networks, limited labour market, retail marketing, family gardens, certain legal used for illegal purposes, dissident groups, the bard movement, ecological movements, intellectual movements, ethnic societies, samizdat, magnitizdat (self-made recordings and tape recordings), and the counterculture” (Zdravomyslova and Voronkov 2002: 50-51).

Significantly, domestic religious practice is not much discussed in scholarship on this wide-ranging informal sphere. This can be explained in part by the periodic application by the regime of extremely harsh punishment for crimes lin-

ked to membership of religious organisations, which prevented religion occupying an informal middle-ground between the public and the private in social discourse. The freedoms that Soviet citizens enjoyed for individual self-realization through friendships, leisure activities, tourism or literary circles could not extend to religious practice in the same way.

The pressure for secrecy was not only driven by exterior pressure from the state, it was also driven internally by religious actors. Religion “has often been associated with restricted knowledge, whether in the form of secret texts [...] or in the form of esoteric teachings understood only by a few” (Barkun 2006: 275-276); and religious secrets have to be protected from “contact with the world’s impurities, from ignorant criticism of those who do not understand them” (Teeuwen 2006: 2). Theorists of secrecy have long demonstrated that the “association of religion with uncanny forces and with secret, privileged knowledge has given to all secrecy an element of the sacred” (Barkun 2006: 280). In this sense, the compulsion to preserve knowledge and secrets during times of persecution had the effect of amplifying the sacred character of objects, texts and people hidden in the home. The state authorities’ projection of the sinister and dangerous nature of religions focussed on both national security issues and questions of public morality and social danger. Sexual motifs in the literature against secretive religious groups feature heavily with regard to Russian sects. Similarly, magical knowledge, in the case of domestic practices in rural Moldova, which could include local healing and charming practices, is kept secret and closely guarded to restrict access to its power, or to generate power, as “that which is hidden grows powerful” (Luhrmann 1989: 131). An important general point about secrecy is that value is linked to scarcity – “secrets [...] consist of information made more valuable by its inaccessibility” (Barkun 2006: 277). And this value is linked also to notions of truth. The impact of the Soviet system’s attempts to infiltrate family and private life and the power associated with secrecy, amplified the power of the “sacred” in times of persecution.

The factors mentioned above inform the various ways in which the sociological tradition in the West has drawn the distinction between private and public religion. The model that views the private/public dichotomy in terms of “civil religions vs. alternative religious communities”, which function “as the cult of the political community” and “individualistic religions of salvation” (Casanova 1992: 25), is useful, when considering the compromise and submission from mainstream religions demanded by the communist state in exchange for legal recognition and toleration. In Orthodox societies, where the political community had been co-extensive with the majority religion, such overt compromise ruptured the relationship between the state and the ethical community of believers creating the increased possibility of “soteriological religious messages” and “iconoclastic prophetic critiques” gaining traction which could “li-



berate the individual from absolute allegiance to the political community” (Casanova 1992: 25) as it had existed prior to communism. Broadly speaking this took two common forms, conversion from mainstream Orthodoxy to one of the many *sects* or participation in underground movements which claimed to represent *true* Orthodoxy. Both constituted the rejection of the “patriotic cult” and required the home as the site of hidden or secret practices that went beyond traditional pragmatic religious ritual to include salvation oriented practices.

The “home vs. religious market place distinction” associates the public sphere with “work” contrasting it with the “private domestic sphere” and thus reflecting the historical separation of the work place from the household in modernity (Casanova 1992: 32). This approach to distinguishing between private and public implicitly devalues activities and labour connected with the household and human reproduction, and identifies the rewards of the public sphere, achieved through salaried labour, as power, status and wealth (Casanova 1992: 32). The shift of more wide-ranging forms of religious practice to the domestic sphere during communism, and the extension of the role of especially older women in religious life, reinforces the idea that the domestic sphere is the appropriate space for religion in modernity. The historical process of the privatization of religion, as Casanova highlights in regard to the USA, could therefore also be considered as a “feminization” of religion (1992: 33). Whereas in the West, the “quest for salvation and personal meaning” retreated to the private sphere as a result of the marketization of the public sphere, creating an “amoral” economic and political sphere of work (Casanova 1992: 34), in the Soviet Union religion was “forced” into the household “as part of the struggle of the public over the private” (Kiaer and Naiman 2006: 1). The public sphere in the Soviet Union, therefore, instead became the area of ideologically driven and morally defined arena of egalitarian work, politics and official culture dominated by men, as outlined by Rogers (2009: 175). These ideals were of course never realised fully, and instead of women being liberated from household tasks in a new social distribution of labour (Kaminer 2017), women were recruited to ensure the ideological project of national population growth (Olson and Adonyeva 2012: 311); the state wanted them to be “workers as well as mothers” (Gal and Kligman 2000: 5). At the same time, collectivization of the rural economy removed some traditionally male activities from the household, such as animal husbandry, carpentry and blacksmithing whilst “tradition keeping” associated with these activities diminished further emphasising the feminine character of the domestic sphere (Olson and Adonyeva 2012: 308). The separation of private and public spheres was never absolute, but under the Soviet system “women continued to be associated with the sphere of the home, even as the space was now revalued” (Olson and Adonyeva 2012: 311).

## 6. Conclusion

Domestic religion does not represent a neatly drawn analytical category, however, scholarship on religious practices in the home points us towards a range of important issues and questions in the study of religions in Soviet and post-Soviet society. I have outlined the use scholars have made of the term domestication to describe a process of religion moving in socio-spatial terms from the public sphere to the private sphere and described the implications of this process in relation to our understanding of gender and inter-generational relations in Soviet and post-Soviet society. The study of domestic religion opens up areas of investigation in material religion, religious transmission, religious ritual and secrecy practices during totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism. Public and private are “relative and indexically linked terms” (Gal cited in Engelke 2012: 159), the phenomenon of domestic religious practice in the Soviet and post-Soviet context has, to use Matthew Engelke’s term, “ambiances” (2012: 159) beyond the seemingly private or hidden realm of the home. The state’s attempts to tame religion and confine it to a limited role resulted in radical responses in the private sphere that had the effect of amplifying the power of the hidden sacred. As Corley states, “uncontrolled religion took over when the controlled Churches were too tightly restricted” (Corley 1996: 3). The implications of these policies have inevitably left traces on the character and role of religion in the public sphere in postsocialism, which have begun to be explored through scholarship on domestic religious practice.

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